

The evolution of the Buddhist *rakṣā* genre in the light of new evidence from Gandhāra: The **Manasvi-nāgarāja-sūtra* from the Bajaur Collection of Kharoṣṭhī Manuscripts

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Abstract

This article examines the **Manasvi-nāgarāja-sūtra*, a unique text in the *rakṣā* genre of Buddhist literature dating to the early centuries of the common era. In addition to exploring special features of the vocabulary and meaning of this text, the article places the **Manasvi-nāgarāja-sūtra* in the wider context of Buddhist textual and ritual practice in the first, second and third centuries CE.

Keywords: Buddhist literature, *Dhāraṇī* texts, Apotropaic texts, Gāndhārī literature, *Mantras*, Bajaur Collection of Kharoṣṭhī Manuscripts

The discovery of a great number of Gāndhārī manuscripts in the 1990s and early 2000s changed our picture of early Buddhism in many ways. Texts from numerous genres of Buddhist literature are represented in the corpus in the form of very early manuscripts that can be dated between the first century BCE and the second or – in the case of the Bamiyan fragments – the third century CE.¹ There is no need to stress the importance of these early attestations for our knowledge of rather early forms of Buddhism, standing as they do on the boundary between oral tradition and written culture, and in a crucial period of Buddhist history when it was expanding dramatically from South Asia to Central and East Asia.

Among these new manuscript collections (the Bajaur Collection of Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts, see Strauch 2008), is one text (Fragment 3) that can be attributed to the class of *rakṣā* or protective texts. As far as we know, this fragment represents the earliest preserved remains of such a text. This fact alone promises new insights into the early history of this genre. Before I describe this new text and its impact on our knowledge of early *rakṣā* literature, I would like to highlight briefly some of the known features of this genre in order to set the frame against which the new Gāndhārī text has to be interpreted.

1 A comprehensive survey of the corpus of Gāndhārī literature will be available with Falk and Strauch 2014.

Early representatives of Buddhist *rakṣā* literature

In a ground-breaking article Peter Skilling (1992) described a special class of Buddhist texts for which he introduced the term “*rakṣā* literature”.² This type of literature consists of texts which are meant to bestow magical power and to protect the persons who command them from a series of calamities. Some of these texts were composed long after the Buddha’s death, while others seem to belong to the earliest strata of Buddhist literature. The Theravāda Buddhists subsume these texts under the label *paritta*, a Pali word based on Old Indian *pari-√trā* “to protect”. The synonymous term *rakṣā* (Pali *rakkhā*) is found both in Theravādin and non-Theravādin traditions and is, according to Skilling, preferable for the designation of this group of texts. In the tradition of the Mūlasarvāstivādins these and some other texts are assembled under the term *mahāsūtra* or “Great *sūtra*” (cf. Skilling 1992: 125–9; 1994; 1997).

The idea behind these texts can be connected with one of the most important features of the Buddha – his ability to grant security and protection. One text from the Pali *Dīghanikāya*, the *Soṇadaṇḍa-sutta*, expresses this characteristic feature with the words:

Samaṇo khalu bho gotamo yasmiṃ gāme vā nigame vā paṭivasati, na tasmiṃ gāme vā nigame vā amanussā manusse viheṭhenti.

(DN I 116.14)

In whatever town or village the *samaṇa* Gotama stays, non-humans do not harm the people of that town or village.

(Skilling 1992: 111).

In the *rakṣā* literature this specific capacity of the Buddha was now extended to an entire class of texts. One of the most prominent of these early protective texts was the *Āṭānāṭika-sūtra*, which can be described as “a charm to protect the monk meditating in the forest from unsympathetic demons (*yakkha/yakṣa*)” (Gethin 1998: 168). Indian versions of this are preserved in the Pali canon of Theravāda Buddhism (DN III 194–206) and in the manuscript remains of the Sanskrit canons of the Sarvāstivāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda schools discovered in Central Asia and in Gilgit in Northern Pakistan (Hoffmann 1939, repr. 1987).³ In the *Āṭānāṭika-sūtra* the *mahārāja* Vaiśravaṇa hands the Buddha a magic spell with the following words, which subsume the main purpose and contents of the *sūtra* as follows:

- 2 See also Skilling’s discussion of the *rakṣā* character of the *mahāsūtras* and their relation to the Theravāda *parittas* in the general introduction to his translation of these texts (1997: 63–88).
- 3 A new and complete version, which is part of the *Dīrghāgama* manuscript, studied by Jens-Uwe Hartmann (2000; 2004) and his students and colleagues, has recently been edited by Lore Sander and Siglinde Dietz (Sander 2007). It is supposed to originate from Gilgit.

santi bhadanta bhagavataḥ śrāvakā bhikṣavo bhikṣuṇya upāsakā upāsikā ye 'raṇyavanaprasthāni prāntāni śayanāsanāny adhyāvasanti | santi cātra vyāḍā yakṣā amanuṣyā naivāsikā ye bhagavatpravacane 'bhiprasannā anabhiprasannās ca | (...) | sādhu bhadanta bhagavataḥ śrāvakā bhikṣavo bhikṣuṇya upāsakā upāsikā idam evātānāṭikāṃ sūtram vi(dyāṃ rakṣāṃ pādavandanīm vistareṇ)odgrhṇīyur (dhārayeyur ātmano guptaye rakṣāyai sukhasparśavihāratāyā anabhiprasannānām vyāḍānām yakṣā-) ṇām amanuṣyānām naivāsikānām abhiprasā(dāyābhi)prasann(ā)nām ca [bhū](yobhāvāya |)

(Hoffmann 1939: 35–7, repr. 1987: 51–3).

Es gibt, o Ehrwürdiger, Jünger des Erhabenen, Mönche und Nonnen, Laienanhänger und Laienanhängerinnen, die an Waldwildnissen gelegenen, einsamen Lagerstätten sich aufhalten. Und dort befinden sich böse Yakṣa-Ortsdämonen, die der Verkündigung des Erhabenen ergeben, und solche, die ihr nicht ergeben sind. (...) Gut mögen, o Ehrwürdiger, des Erhabenen Jünger, Mönche und Nonnen, Laienanhänger und Laienanhängerinnen diese Āṭṇāṭika-Sūtra, (Zauberformel, -Schutzzauber, -Fußverehrung in vollem Umfang) lernen (und behalten zu ihrem Schutze, zur Bewachung, zum Wohlsein und um die nicht ergebenen bösen) Yakṣa-Ortsdämonen zur Ergebenheit zu bringen wie um die ergebenen zu vermehren

(Hoffmann 1939: 80 f., repr. 1987: 96 f.).

With regard to the purpose and intended audience of the magic formulas, the text makes three points clear: a) The reason why these magic formulas are introduced are because of monastics living in a remote and potentially dangerous environment. They are especially associated with ascetic practices. b) The protective quality of the text is achieved by magic power, which has to be activated through memorization. c) Access to this power is extended to the whole Buddhist community, consisting of four groups: monks, nuns, lay men, and lay women.

These characteristics are shared by all extant versions of the text and it can therefore be suggested that they belong to its ancient core. But if we compare the Pali with the Sanskrit versions, we observe an important difference. Some of the Sanskrit versions insert in several places a textual passage which is not found in the Pali text. It is introduced by the phrase *tadyathā* and followed by isolated words. The passage is concluded by the word *svāhā*, a Sanskrit term meaning “hail” or “success”:

tadyathā | bilimāha | balimele | purā | pure | ghorī | gandhārī | corī | caṇḍālī | sopakke | sthulasāpati | padumāpati svāhā |

(Hoffmann 1939: 33–5, repr. 1987: 49–51).⁴

4 Other – only partially preserved – *mantras* are found on the following pages: Hoffmann 1939: 39, 63, 69, 75, 77 and 1987: 55, 79, 85, 91, 93.

In the terminology of the *rakṣā* literature these little textual components are called *mantra* or *mantrapada*, in some cases also *vidyā*, all terms meaning “magic spell”. These *mantras* consist of various syllables, some of which represent intelligible lexemes, while others are not intelligible at all (Skilling 1992: 153–6). Other texts – generally Mahāyāna – introduce the lexeme *dhāraṇī* into the terminology, resulting in terms like *mantradhāraṇī* (used by Asaṅga) or *dhāraṇīmantrapada* (found in the *Megha-sūtra*) (cf. Skilling 1992: 150–52). A whole collection of *mantras* and *dhāraṇīs* is found in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*, in the chapter called *dhāraṇīparivartaḥ* (Vaidya 1960b: 233–5). This text uses the terms *mantrapadadhāraṇī*, *dhāraṇīmantrapada* and *dhāraṇīpada* side by side, combining the inherited terminology (*mantra*, *mantrapada*) with the new one and leaving no doubt that they have to be perceived as synonyms.⁵ According to Asaṅga’s classification of *dhāraṇīs*, the *mantradhāraṇī* is one of four *dhāraṇī* categories which are governed by a Bodhisattva, consisting of *dharmadhāraṇī*, *arthadhāraṇī*, *mantradhāraṇī* and *bodhisattvaḥkṣāntilābhāya dhāraṇī*. The *mantradhāraṇī* is defined as follows:

*tatra mantradhāraṇī katamā | iha bodhisattvas tadrūpam samādhivaśitām
pratilabhate yayā yāni mantrapadānītisaṃśamanāya sattvānām adhi-
ṣṭhati tāni siddhāni bhavanti paramasiddhāny amoghāny anekavidhānām
ītinām saṃśamanāya | iyam ucyate bodhisattvasya mantradhāraṇī*

(cited after Lamotte 1949–80, IV: 1857).

Qu’est-ce que la *dhāraṇī* de *mantra*? Le Bodhisattva gagne une telle maîtrise en concentration que par elle il consacre les syllabes magiques destinées à apaiser les fléaux de tous les êtres, et ces syllabes deviennent ainsi effectives, suprêmement effectives et infaillibles pour apaiser de multiples fléaux. Telle est, chez le Bodhisattva, la *dhāraṇī* de *mantra*

(tr. Lamotte 1949–80, IV: 1858).⁶

Skilling convincingly calls this type of *mantra* “protective”. This is the category found in Śrāvakayāna texts and early Mahāyāna *sūtras*, and has to be distinguished

5 For a discussion of the terms *mantrapada* and *mantradhāraṇīpada* and numerous references cf. Pagel 2007: 57–61.

6 The specific meaning of *dhāraṇī* in Asaṅga’s text is not undisputed. Skilling (1992: 150, fn. 3) obviously perceives *dhāraṇī* in the basic sense “spell”, rejecting Braarvig’s suggestion (1985: 19 f.) that the term designates the capacity “in retaining or remembering spells” rather than the spell itself. However, such an understanding seems to be shared by Lamotte who stresses: “Elle (la *Dhāraṇī*) n’est pas à proprement parler un *mantra*, une formule magique, comme on traduit généralement; elle est au premier chef la mémorisation des enseignements de tous les Buddha”. See also Pagel 2007: 59 f., fn. 50. Although the text of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* cited above clearly supports Skilling’s interpretation of *dhāraṇī* as “spell”, it is probably advisable to bear in mind this broader meaning of *dhāraṇī* when applied in a Mahāyāna context. For *dhāraṇī* in the sense of “mnemonic device” cf. also Nattier 2003: 291 f., fn. 549. An extensive discussion of the semantic values of the term *dhāraṇī* is now provided in Davidson 2009.

from the “spiritual *mantras*” which are linked with spiritual goals like enlightenment and were introduced not later than the second century CE (Skilling 1992: 151).

As he pointed out, the earliest texts that used these elements were composed in the early centuries of our era in North India.⁷ In many cases the texts were not complete new compositions, but used the protective texts of traditional Buddhism, which became enriched by magic spells. The ways in which this new material was incorporated into existing textual units are different. In the case of the *Ātānāṭika-sūtra* the *mantras* were inserted into the main textual body. However, the manuscripts show that this approach was followed only by some recensions, partially independently of each other.⁸

Another method is represented by the text tradition of the *Nagaropama-sūtra* (Bongard-Levin et al. 1996). Here an entire text called *vyākaraṇa* is added as an appendix to a traditional *sūtra*. But supplementing the old *rakṣā* texts is only one way to incorporate this new material into the Buddhist literary tradition. As Peter Skilling (1992: 113) has shown, whole new classes of texts emerge. Probably the most important of these are the so-called *Pañcarakṣā* texts or “Five Protections”, a collection of *sūtras* which also frequently use an older canonical core, but develop out of this completely new texts. As Skilling stresses: “these texts were extremely popular in Northern India, Nepal, and Tibet, as may be seen from the numerous manuscripts kept in libraries around the world” (1992: 138). In general, it is very difficult to ascertain exactly when the composition of these new texts took place. The manuscript evidence is rather late and seems to be separated from the actual events by several centuries. But there is good evidence that at least some of the texts which were later assembled under the label *Pañcarakṣā* circulated in an earlier form in the first centuries CE.⁹ Thus the earliest Chinese translations of the *Mahāmāyūrīvidyārājñī* (henceforth: *Mahāmāyūrī*) belong to the fourth century CE (T. 986).¹⁰ An early Sanskrit version of this text is part of the so-called Bower manuscript found at Kucha in Central Asia and which can be dated to the early sixth century CE (Sander 1987).

The Gāndhārī **Manasvi-nāgarāja-sūtra* (BajC 3)

Thanks to the new discoveries from Gandhāra, we are now in a position to present the earliest manuscript of such a newly composed *rakṣā* text. It is part of the

7 According to Peter Skilling “the practice of *rakṣā* developed further with the use of *mantras* or *vidyās*, by the beginning of the Common Era at the very latest” (1992: 168, see also, the more detailed remarks on pp. 163 f.).

8 According to Helmut Hoffmann (1939: 87, repr. 1987: 103), the *mantras* entered the text of the *Ātānāṭika-sūtra* only in Turkestan. They are not found in the Chinese and Tibetan translations. However, according to Lore Sander, *mantras* are also part of the *Dīrghāgama* version, which probably originates from Gilgit. Their exact location and wording is usually different from that in the Central Asian version (Sander, email communication in November 2012).

9 Cf. for the *Mahāpratisarāvidyārājñī*, which “already existed in the fourth century CE or even in the third in some early form” (Hidas forthcoming a). Cf. also Hidas 2012: 24, fn. 16.

10 A comprehensive treatment of the complicated textual history of the *Mahāmāyūrī* in the Chinese traditions is now available in Sørensen 2006.

Bajaur Collection and is written in a variety of the Kharoṣṭhī script of the Indian north west and composed in the language of that region, the so-called Gāndhārī. Both script and language were in use up to the third or early fourth century CE (cf. Strauch 2011). According to their philological and palaeographical features, the texts from the Bajaur Collection can be dated to the first two centuries of our era. Given the date suggested by Peter Skilling for the introduction of the use of *mantras* in Buddhist *rakṣā* literature (“the beginning of the Common Era”) the evidence for this manuscript would suggest it falls at the very beginning of the development just described.

The text of the Bajaur Fragment 3 (BajC 3) is written on both sides of a birch bark scroll measuring about 17 × 39 cm. It is composed as a short *sūtra* describing how the *nāgarāja* Manasvin approached the Buddha and handed over to him a special *mantra*, which could be used to bear all kind of calamities. The structure of the *sūtra* can be summarized as follows:

1. Introduction (*nidāna*): Śrāvastī.
2. Manasvin approaches the Buddha.
3. Manasvin’s concern: “The monks are not anymore devoted to the discipline of wakefulness” (*na bhūyo jāgarikāyogam anuyuktā viharanti*).
4. Buddha’s answer: Reason = fear.
5. Manasvin utters the *mantra* and its effects.
 - 5.1. The effects of the *mantra*: fearlessness
 - 5.2. The *mantra*
 - 5.3. The spheres of use of the *mantra*: way, forest, king’s palace, enemies, fire, water, etc.
6. Buddha repeats the *mantra* and its effects.
 - 6.1. The effects of the *mantra*: fearlessness
 - 6.2. The *mantra*
 - 6.3. The spheres of use of the *mantra*: way, forest, king’s palace, enemies, fire, water, etc.
7. The *nāga* king instructs the Buddha to teach the *mantra*.
8. The Buddha instructs Ānanda to teach the *mantra*.
9. The conclusion.

Although the *nāga* king Manasvin is not found in old or south Indian Buddhist texts, he seems to have been quite popular in north Indian Buddhism. His name:

is exclusively known from Northern Buddhist texts like the *Lalitavistara* (ed. Lefmann 1902: 204, lines 9–10; 219, line 9), the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* (ed. Vaidya 1960b: 2.17), and the *Mahāvīyūtpatti* (chapter 168, Sakaki 1965: 227–31). His special association with magical practices is indicated by his mentioning in protective texts like the *Mahāmāyūrī*, (ed. Takubo 1972: 5, 41, cf. ed. Ol’denburg 1899: 221, 247) and the so-called *Ātānātikahṛdaya*, a Central Asian appendix to the respective *sūtra* (ed. Hoffmann 1939: 104 (repr. 1987: 120), v. 14, cf. Sander 1987: 207 f.) (Strauch 2008: 120).

Manasvin’s name is also found in other protective texts, like in the *mantra* of the *Mahādaṇḍadhārāṇī-Śītavaṭī* (Hidas forthcoming b) and in the *Megha-sūtra*

(Bendall 1880: 306 f.).¹¹ According to this evidence the Gāndhārī *sūtra* most probably belongs to a northern Buddhist tradition.

The following discussion aims to determine the position of this newly discovered Gāndhārī protective *sūtra* within the already known Buddhist *rakṣā* traditions discussed above. For this purpose we will concentrate on a few selected passages.¹²

The effects of the *mantra*

The first part describes the efficiency of the spell. As can be seen from the summary of the contents, it is repeated twice (5.1 and 6.1). It is therefore possible to reconstruct this passage to a considerable degree.

Quotation 1 (*BajC* 3, lines 14–18)

... *ṇa teṇa maṇuṣaṇa bhayidave [ṇa a](maṇuṣaṇa ṇa vyade)aṇa bhayidave ṇa drigheana bhaidave ṇa jat[u]ṇa [bhayidav](e) [ṇa] + + + + + ṇa yakṣaṇa bhayidave ṇa praduthacitaṇa bhayidave ṇa śa[st]reṇa [ka](le kaṭave) ṇa aḡiṇa dajidave ṇa udeami kale kaṭave · ṇa viṣeṇa kale (kaṭave ...)*

Translation

... he has not to be afraid of human beings, (of non-human beings, of wild beasts,) of snakes, of *demons,¹³ of ?, of yakṣas (i.e. demons), of evil-minded, he cannot die from a weapon, he is not to be burnt by fire, he cannot die in the water, he cannot die from poison.

The major topic of this list is fearlessness (*ṇa bhayidave*, Skt. *na bhetaḥ*), supplemented by different kinds of immunities against all kinds of calamities. The given list largely corresponds to a conventional inventory which generally agrees with the so-called ten *antarāyas*, “hindrances, obstacles”, which are already known to the Vinaya (cf. CPD s.v.), among them the king, thieves, fire, water, human beings, non-human beings, wild beasts, snakes (*rāja*, *cora*, *agḡi*, *udaka*, *manussa*, *amanussa*, *vāḷa*, *sirīmsapa*).

There are more parallels that point to the canonical background of these ideas. The positive counterparts to these calamities are part of another conventional list that contains the so-called advantages (P. *anisaṃsa*, Skt. *anuṣaṃsa*) that one

11 These two references I owe to Gergely Hidas.

12 The discussion is based in part on my previous online publication (Strauch 2007/08: 40–47).

13 The meaning of *jatu-* is not completely clear. The suggested translation connects this term with Skt. *yātu* “Bez. einer Gattung von Dämonen, die in allerhand spukhaften Formen erscheinen” (PW s.v.). The word is already known in the Ṛgveda, but is especially found in Atharvavedic contexts. For the related Iranian term translated as “sorcerer” (Avestan *yātu*, Middle Persian *jādūg*) in different literary and historical contexts see Forrest 2011: 63–70. The word is also discussed with references to previous treatments by Boyce (1975: 85). A connection with Old Indian *jantú* (CDIAL 5110) cannot be completely ruled out. The parallel in the Niya document 565 *jamḍunaṃ* could speak in favour of such an interpretation. For this word Bailey (1948: 332) could establish the meaning “snake”. But in view of the preceding synonymous *drighe-* (Pali *dirgha-*) “snake”, the translation “demon” is preferred here.

obtains from various religious practices. One such list is found in the *Mettānisaṃsa-sutta* (AN V. 342.1–13), a text belonging to the protective literature of the Pali tradition. The means by which these advantages can be attained is defined as *mettā* “friendliness”. As Schmithausen, in his work *Maitrī and Magic* (1997) shows, *maitrī* (P. *mettā*) as a specific Buddhist concept has much in common with otherwise magic or supernatural capacities. Only by his *maitrī* did the Buddha subdue an elephant, by *maitrī* is he able to achieve the most unbelievable things. It is therefore quite natural that the concept of *maitrī* becomes an adequate starting point for the introduction of magic practices. Schmithausen (1997: 67) describes this process thus:

Though, on the one hand, friendliness tends to become regarded as an autonomous means for protection ... effective with regard to insentient forms of nature like water, fire or poison, there is, on the other hand, a tendency to have some doubt about its protective effectivity. At any rate, it is often supplemented or even replaced by other protective devices like commemoration of the Buddha or the Three Jewels, or appealing to their (or other powerful beings’) protective power, or “tapping” this power by means of truth magic. Increasingly, magical formulas (*mantra*, *dhāraṇī*) come to be employed ...

The text in the *Mettānisaṃsa-sutta* (AN V 342.1–13) runs as follows:

*sukhaṃ supati, sukhaṃ paṭibujjhati, na pāpakaṃ supinaṃ passati.
Manussānaṃ piyo hoti, amanussānaṃ piyo hoti, devatā rakkhanti, nāssa
aggī vā visaṃ vā satthaṃ vā kamati, tuvaṭaṃ cittaṃ samādhīyati, mukha-
vaṇṇo vippasīdati, asammūlho kālaṃ karoti, uttariṃ appaṭivijjhanto
brahmalokūpago hoti*

(AN V 342.5–10).

(1) One sleeps well; (2) one awakens happily; (3) one does not have bad dreams; (4) one is pleasing to human beings; (5) one is pleasing to spirits; (6) deities protect one; (7) fire, poison, and weapons do not injure one; (8) one’s mind quickly becomes concentrated; (9) one’s facial complexion is serene; (10) one dies unconfused; and (11) if one does not penetrate further, one fares on to the brahmā world.

(tr. Bodhi 2012: 1573).

Similar, but not entirely identical lists of obstacles/calamities and advantages are found throughout Buddhist literature of different genres and periods (cf. for some of them Strauch 2007/08: 41–6). And they become a typical and characteristic feature of the newly composed protective texts, as for example the *vyākaraṇa* of the *Nagaropama-sūtra*:

*yaḥ kaścin mārīṣa idaṃ vyākaraṇaṃ ... manasikariṣyati saḥ ahinā na
damṣyati viṣaṃ kāye na tariṣyati śāstraṃ na kramiṣyati nodakena kālaṃ*

karīṣyati agninā na dhakṣyati rājāno 'pi na prasahiṣyamti corā na muṣiṣyamti rājakulamadhyagato 'pi svastinottariṣyati gāḍhabandhanabaddho 'pi mokṣyati āsannāsamāgato 'pi abhyavakāśagato bhaviṣyati sarve ca kṛtyakākhordamantravetāḍa prativigamiṣyamti sarve ca bhūtagaṇā na vihetāyīṣyamti anyatra pūrvakeṇa karmaṇā.

(Bongard-Levin et al. 1996: 85; II.11, cf. also II.25)

Whosoever, Good Sir, will ... reflect upon this exposition, he will not be bitten by snakes, nor will poison work in his body, nor will weapons have effect (against him), nor will he drown, nor will he be burned by fire, nor will kings suppress him, nor will thieves rob him; even when he is in the midst of a royal palace, he will escape (any misfortune) on account of his good luck; even when he is bound by tight fetters, he will be freed; even when he is encroached upon (by others), he will be unconstrained; and all sorceries, maledictions, curses, and demonic arts will be neutralized; and all the legions of ghosts will not harm him except as a result of his former karma.

(Bongard-Levin et al. 1996: 99)

Of special importance for the evaluation of the Gāndhārī text, however, is the parallel to the *Mahāmāyūrī*. Although the conventional list of calamities against which the spell is supposed to help is found here in an extended form and in a slightly different terminology, it also refers to “fearlessness” as the main aim of the *mantra*’s use.¹⁴

rājabhayāc caurabhayād agnibhayād udakabhayāt bandhakabhayāt pratyarthikabhayāt

(Takubo 1972: 42, cf. ed. Ol’denburg 1899: 248)

(shall protect) from the fear from kings, thieves, fire, water, allies and enemies.

This list is complemented by another, closely related, enumeration of situations in which the *mantra* should be memorized (*manasi-√kr*):

iyaṃ cānanda mahāmāyūrī vidyārājñī grāmagatena manasikartavyā. arāṇyagatena manasikartavyā. pathigatena manasikartavyā. utpathagatena. rājakulamadhyagatena. cauramadhyagatena. agnimadhyagatena. udakamadhyagatena. pratyarthikamadhyagatena. parṣanmadhyagatena. vivādamadhyagatena. ahidaṣṭena. viṣapītena. sarvabhayaṣannipātītena ca manasikartavyā.

(Takubo 1972: 9–10, cf. ed. Ol’denburg 1899: 224)

This queen among the spells, this *Mahāmāyūrī*, should be memorized by a person, who has got into a village, who has got inside a forest, who has got

14 The list is found in two different forms (Takubo 1972: 28, 42).

on the path or off the path, who has got inside the king's palace, who has got amidst thieves, who has got into fire, who has got into water, who has got amidst enemies, who has got into an assembly, who has got into a dispute, who was bitten by a snake, who has drunk poison, (to sum up) who is afflicted by all sorts of fear.

This compositional principle is also found in the *Gāndhārī sūtra* where we find an almost identical list.

Quotation 2 (BajC 3, lines 39–42)

aya khu maṇaspiya vija ° pathagadeṇa maṇasikaṭave upaṣa[gadeṇa] (ma) [ṇa](si)kaṭave raṇṇagadeṇa maṇasikaṭave rayauḷamaṇagadeṇa maṇasikaṭave + + + + midramajagadeṇa maṇasikaṭave amidramajagadeṇa maṇasikaṭave · (śastrataragadeṇa) maṇasikaṭave · agiataragadeṇa maṇasikaṭave udeataragadeṇa maṇasikaṭave) viṣapideṇa maṇasikaṭave

Translation

This is the spell of Manasvin. It should be memorized by a person who has got on the path, who has got off the path, who has got inside a forest, who has got inside the king's palace, (...) who has got amidst friends, who has got amidst enemies, (who has got in between weapons), who has got into fire, who has got into water, who has drunk poison.

If we compare the lists of both texts in a synoptic way, their partial overlapping and general parallelism as well as their relationship to the categories of *antarāyas* as described in the Pali Vinaya becomes reasonably obvious, as shown in Table 1.

As can be seen in Table 1, the correspondence between BajC/list 2 and *Mahāmāyūrī*/list 2 is particularly high and seems to speak in favour of a common source of both traditions. While the first lists are much indebted to the canonical models of the *antarāya* and *anuśaṃsa* lists, these later lists seem to reflect a slightly different terminology which is closely connected with the time of the composition of these new texts. Parallels from the *vyākaraṇa* of the *Nagaropama-sūtra*¹⁵ and from the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*¹⁶ can support this evaluation.

15 ... *pathagatā apy utpathagatā api ārāmagatā api śūnyāgāragatā* (Bongard-Levin et al. 1996: 83; II.2) "... whether they are on the (right) path or have gone astray, whether they are in pleasure gardens or in deserted houses" (tr. Bongard-Levin et al. 1996: 96).

16 *na ca khalu punar devaputrās tasya kulaputrasya vā kuladuhitro vā imāṃ prajñāpāramitāṃ udgrhṇato dhārayato vācayataḥ paryavāpnuvataḥ pravartayamānasya aranyagatasya vā vrkṣamūlagatasya vā śūnyāgāragatasya vā abhyavakāśagatasya vā pathi gatasya vā utpathagatasya vā aṭavīgatasya vā mahāsamudragatasya vā ... bhayaṃ vā bhaviṣyati, stambhitatvaṃ vā bhaviṣyati, utpatsyate vā* (Vaidya 1960a: 25.18–22) "There will be no fear, will be no paralysis, and they will not appear, Gods, for the noble man or woman who is learning, keeping, reciting, mastering and teaching this Perfection of Wisdom, not in a forest, not at the root of a tree, not in an empty house, not in an open place, not on the path, not off the path, not in the woods, not on the ocean" (cf. Strauch 2007/08: 45).

Table 1. Comparative list of calamities (*antarāya*) and advantages (*anuśaṃsā*)

A. antarāyas	B. BajC 3/list 1	C. BajC 3/list 2	D. Mahāmāyūrī/list 1	E. Mahāmāyūrī/list 2
<i>manussa- amanussa- vāḷa- sirimṣapa</i>	<i>maṇuśa- amaṇuśa- vyaḍea- drighea- jatu- ? yakṣa- praduṭṭhacita- śastra- agi- udea- viṣa-</i>	<i>śastrataragada- agiataragada- udeataragada- viṣapida- pathagada- upasagada- rañagada- rayaūlamaṇḍa- midramaṇḍa- amidramaṇḍa-</i>	<i>agnibhaya- udakabhaya- rājabhaya- bandhakabhaya- pratyarthikabhaya- caurabhaya-</i>	<i>agnimadhyagata- udakamadhyagata- viṣapīta- pathigata- utpathigata- araṇyagata- rājakulamadhyagata- pratyarthikamadhyagata- cauramadhyagata- grāmagata- parśanmadhyagata- vivādamadhyagata- ahidaṣṭa-</i>

The addressees: Forest monks

According to the above-cited passage from the *Ātānāṭika-sūtra* the protective function of the *sūtra* was particularly associated with a special group of monks, those who are said to dwell in isolated places such as, for example, forests. The *Gāndhārī sūtra* ends with the sentence:

Quotation 3 (BajC 3, lines 46–51)

*ughiṇahi aṇade maṇaspia vijaraya · payaṇehi aṇad(e) ma[ṇaspia vija]
raya araṇiaṇa bhikhuṇa hidae bheśadi suhae caduṇa pariṣaṇa bhikhuṇa
bhikhuṇiṇa uaṣeṇa uaṣiṇa arthae bheśadi hidae suhae bheśadi [pha]
(ṣa)viharadae bheśadi · eva bhate [bhagava] [a]iṣpa aṇado ? ? + + ?
[va ye] + + va aiṣpa aṇado maṇaspio ca ṇagarayo sadevamaṇuṣaṣaro ?
+ (bhagavado) bhaṣido abhiṇadi ❀*

Translation

Ānanda, take up this king-spell of Manasvin. Ānanda, learn this king-spell of Manasvin. It shall be for the welfare and the joy of the monks dwelling in forests. It shall be for the benefit, for the welfare, for the joy, for the comfort of the four assemblies, (i.e.) the monks, the nuns, the laymen, the laywomen. Thus (may it be), Venerable Lord, (spoke the honourable Ānanda.) (...) Ānanda and the *nāga* king Manasvin, together with gods, humans and *asuras*, enjoyed the speech of the Venerable.

Again the text supports two points:

- 1) The magic spell is to be distributed among the four assemblies, i.e. among all followers of the Buddhist order, including the laymen and laywomen.
- 2) A special position, however, is given to the forest monks. They are labelled here with the distinctive term *araṇia* (Skt. *āraṇyaka*, Pali *āraṇṇika*). Forest living was already in early Buddhist monasticism one of the twelve or thirteen kinds of ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*, *dhutaṅga*) (cf. Gethin 1998: 98 f.). *Āraṇyakas* are monks devoted to ascetic practices in an isolated environment. That they are in special need of remedies against natural calamities such as fire, water and snakebites, calls for no special remark (cf. e.g. Schmithausen 1997: 35).

The magical formula (*vidyārāja*, *mantra*)

The *Gāndhārī sūtra* calls the magic formula *vijaraya*, Skt. *vidyārāja*, spell-king. This term has to be connected with feminine *vidyārājñī* “spell-queen” or “queen among spells” which is regularly used in the texts of the *Pañcarakṣā* tradition to designate the magical spell. There seems to be, however, some evidence that the feminine gender of this term was the result of a later development, possibly influenced by the growing role of the female element in Tantric practices. Thus Hidas noted that the oldest manuscripts of the *Mahāpratisarā-Mahāvidyārājñī*, one of the texts of the *Pañcarakṣā* tradition, use the masculine title *Mahāpratisara-Mahāvidyārāja*/^o*rājā* (2012: 21 f.). He explains this change in gender by the fact “that the roots of this tradition go back to Brahmanism, to texts as early as the *Atharva-veda*”. The *Gāndhārī sūtra* may add another

example for the early masculine gender of the spell, although it can hardly be used to strengthen Hidas' argument about an Atharvavedic origin.

Beside the term *vijaraya* (Skt. *vidyārāja*) the Gāndhārī text uses the term *mantra* in its Gāndhārī equivalent *matra*. Like the other elements of the text, the *mantra* is also reproduced twice: once as received by the Buddha from the *nāgarāja*'s mouth (= 5.2); and once as announced by the Buddha (6.2). Due to this repetition it is possible to reconstruct most of its contents.

Quotation 4 (BaṅC 3, lines 34–8)

*samyasida ° paṃḍara ° karaḍa ° keyura ° [d]u[d]ura ° data ° davia ° bidu-
madi ° śirimadi ° teyavadi ° raṣagapa[di] (° puruṣa ° k[a]ja[a]) vihatra °
taragatriṭhi ° iṣimuha ° hili cili ° khili cili ° kha ? + + + + (vihala) raṣaga-
triṭhi ° oruḍa ° uruḍa ° dadura ° daha ° utama ° suut[ta](ma) + + +
utamatama*

Like many other *mantras* it consists of a multitude of isolated terms. Some of them are magical syllables, which can be found in different Indian magical traditions, like e.g. *hili cili*, *khili cili*.¹⁷

The present paper is not the place to provide a comprehensive discussion of all the terms listed in the *mantra/vidyārāja* of the *sūtra*. Instead, I wish to stress a feature of this list that is indicated by the text itself. The *mantra* is concluded by the words:

Quotation 5 (BaṅC 3, lines 29–30)

*evameva maṇaspi evameva maṇaspi (evameva ma)ṇaspi[a · imeṣa]
mahaviṣaṇa ṇamo jaṇea · ṇa teṇa maṇuṣaṇa bhayidave ...*

Translation

Thus is (the spell) of Manasvin, thus is (the spell) of Manasvin, thus is (the spell) of Manasvin. (Who) would know the names of these great poisons has not to be afraid of human beings ...

The text thus explicitly states that the terms contained in the *mantra* are the names of poisonous substances that are obviously subsumed here as a group called *mahāviṣa* “great poisons”. By knowing their names, they are subdued, and – moreover – convey general immunity against all sorts of calamities. Fortunately, there exists a list of such *mahāviṣas* in the *Mahāmāyūrī* (Takubo 1972: 55, cf. Ol'denburg 1899: 257–8):

*udgrhṇa tvam ānanda mahāviṣāṇāṃ nāmāni. tadyathā.
aṇḍarā, paṇḍarā, karaḍā, keyūrā, bhūtāṃgamā, bhūtapati, vindupati,
śiripati, tejapati, tejograpati, yaśopati, araḍā, taraḍā, taradā,
tarataradā, duttarā, dantājuhā, juhā, johā, jolā, melā, phurā, guhā,*

17 See e.g. *Mahāpratisarā-Mahāvidyārājñī*: *hili 2 | mili 2 | kili 2 | cili 2 | sili 2* (Hidas 2012: 181). For non-Buddhist occurrences see e.g. the *Agnipurāṇa*: *om kili kili om khili khili vili vili* (Mitra 1870–79: 231) and the closely related spell in the *Garuḍapurāṇa* (1.38.7): *kilikili khilikhili milimili cilicili* (Kumar 2006: 78).

Table 2. Names of poisons from the *mantra* of BajC 3 and from the *Mahāmāyūrī*

BajC 3	<i>Mahāmāyūrī</i>
<i>paṇḍara</i>	<i>paṇḍarā</i>
<i>karaḍa</i>	<i>karadā</i>
<i>keyura</i>	<i>keyūrā</i>
<i>bidumaṭi</i>	<i>vindupati</i>
<i>śirimaṭi</i>	<i>siripati</i>
<i>teyavadi</i>	<i>tejapati</i>
<i>taragatriṭhi</i>	<i>taraṅgāriṣṭa</i>

rucirā, danturā, ilikikā, kirikirikā, kāmva, śatanturā, vikuli, kirimi, taraṅgā, riṣṭā, āmravati, jambumati, manumati, kamale, vimale, kuṇḍale, ahituhi, duhi, vakve, vakvadūte, vatsamāte, mahāgāre, tulamve sulamve svāhā.

ity ete ānanda mahāviśās te 'py anayā mahāmāyūryā vidyārājñyā svāter bhikṣor mama sarvasatvānāṃ ca rakṣāṃ kurvantu

Take up, Ānanda, the names of the Great Poisons, namely:

aṇḍarā, paṇḍarā, karaḍā, keyūrā, bhūtāṅgamā, bhūtapati, vindupati, śiripati, tejapati, tejograpati, yaśopati, araḍā, taraḍā, taradā, tarataradā, duttarā, dantājuhā, juhā, johā, jolā, melā, phurā, guhā, rucirā, danturā, ilikikā, kirikirikā, kāmva, śatanturā, vikuli, kirimi, taraṅgā, riṣṭā, āmravati, jambumati, manumati, kamale, vimale, kuṇḍale, ahituhi, duhi, vakve, vakvadūte, vatsamāte, mahāgāre, tulamve sulamve. Hail.

These are, Ānanda, the names of the Great Poisons. They too shall protect by the Great Peacock spell-queen the monk Svāti, me and all living beings.

The words *tadyathā* “namely” and *svāha* “hail” at the beginning and at the end of the enumeration make clear that this text passage represents a *mantra*. As can be seen from a comparison between both these *mahāviśā* lists, they share a number of identical or closely related terms (Table 2, see also Table 3, columns A and B). The close relationship between the Gāndhārī *sūtra* and the *Mahāmāyūrī* as an early representative of the class of *Pañcarakṣā* texts was already indicated by the common use of the term *vidyārāja/vidyārājñī* and the *antarāya*-based lists of calamities/spheres of use. It seems to be further corroborated by the partly identical lists of “Great Poisons”.

Especially interesting are the pairs *bidumaṭi-vindupati*, *śirimaṭi-siripati* and *teyavadi-tejapati* which seem to indicate that the list of the *Mahāmāyūrī* had been translated from a source composed in Gāndhārī where the feminine possessive suffix was given as *vadi* (*teyavadi* = Skt. *tejovati*). This suffix was obviously misunderstood by the *Mahāmāyūrī* or its source as representative of Skt. *pati*, which is homonymous in Gāndhārī.

The tradition connected with these designations of poisonous substances/plants is not restricted to these two *mantras*. Thus there is another spell in the *Mahāmāyūrī* that also contains some of the terms belonging to the list of “Great Poisons” (indicated here in bold print, see Table 3, column E).

Table 3. Comparative list of names of poisons from different Buddhist traditions and Āyurvedic literature

A Bajaur Fr. 3	B <i>Mahāmāyūrī</i> 1	C ŚārdĀv.	D MSahasrPr.	E <i>Mahāmāy.</i> 2	F Tibetan	G Medieval āyurvedic lit.
<i>pamḍara</i>	<i>aṇḍarā</i>	<i>aṇḍare</i>	<i>aṇḍare</i>	<i>aṇḍare</i>		
<i>karaḍa</i>	<i>paṇḍarā</i>	<i>pāṇḍare</i>	<i>paṇḍare</i>	<i>paṇḍare</i>	<i>paṇḍare</i>	<i>pāṇḍara</i>
<i>keyura</i>	<i>karadā</i>	<i>kāraṇḍe</i>	<i>kaṭake</i>	<i>*kaṇḍare</i>	<i>karate</i>	<i>karaṇḍa</i>
<i>bidumaṭi</i>	<i>keyūrā</i>	<i>keyūre</i>	<i>keyūre</i>		<i>keyūre</i>	<i>keyūra</i>
<i>śirimaṭi</i>	<i>vindupati</i>	<i>* bandhumati</i>			<i>bindumate</i>	<i>bindukinī, binduka</i>
<i>teyavadi</i>	<i>siripati</i>					<i>śrīmatī</i>
<i>taragatriṭhi</i>	<i>tejapati</i>					<i>tejani, tejasvin, tejavatī</i>
<i>daha</i>	<i>taraṅgāriṣṭa</i>				<i>taraṅgapriṣṭi</i>	
	<i>araḍā</i>				<i>daha</i>	
	<i>bhūtāṅgamā</i>				<i>araḍa</i>	
	<i>johā jolā</i>				<i>bodhyaṅgamate</i>	
	<i>jaṃbumati</i>			<i>jaṃbuvati</i>	<i>jele jela</i>	
					<i>taraḍa</i>	<i>tarata</i>

*iyam cānanda mahāmāyūrī vidyārājñī kāśyapena samyaksaṃbuddhena bhāṣitā cābhyānumoditā ca. tadyathā. **aṇḍare paṇḍare kaṇḍare** maṇḍare khaṇḍare jaṃbu juṃbunadi **jaṃbuvati**, matte maṇḍitike, amare siddhi, hara hara hara hara, paśu paśu paśu paśu paśupati svāhā siddhi siddhi siddhi siddhi svāhā* (Takubo 1972: 44, cf. Ol'denburg 1899: 223, 250).

And, Ānanda, this Great Peacock queen-spell was announced and approved by Kāśyapa, the Completely Enlightened, namely: aṇḍare paṇḍare kaṇḍare maṇḍare khaṇḍare jaṃbu juṃbunadi jaṃbuvati, matte maṇḍitike, amare siddhi, hara hara hara hara, paśu paśu paśu paśu paśupati. Hail. siddhi siddhi siddhi siddhi. Hail.

Traces of this tradition are also found outside the *Mahāmāyūrī*. There are a few other rather short variants of *mantras* referring to some of the characteristic terms. In the *Śārdūlakārṇāvadāna* a formula called *ṣaḍakṣarīvidyā* is handed over by the Buddha to Ānanda with the following words (Mukhyopadhyaya 1954: 4–5, parallel terms indicated here in bold, see Table 3, column C).¹⁸

udgrhṇa tvam ānanda imāṃ ṣaḍakṣarīvidyāṃ dhāraya vācaya paryavāpnuhi ātmano hitāya sukhāya bhikṣūṇāṃ bhikṣuṇīnāṃ upāsakānāṃ upāsikānāṃ hitāya sukhāya. Iyam ānanda ṣaḍakṣarīvidyā ṣaḍbhiḥ samyaksaṃbuddhair bhāṣitā, caturbhiḥ ca mahārājaiḥ, śakreṇa devānāṃ indreṇa, brahmaṇā ca saḥāpatinā. mayā caitarhi śākyamuninā samyaksaṃbuddhena bhāṣitā. Tvam apy etarhi ānanda tāṃ dhārasya vācaya paryavāpnuhi. yad uta tadyathā

***aṇḍare paṇḍare kāraṇḍe keyūre** 'rcihaste kharagrīve **bandhumati** vīramati dhara vidha cilimile viloḍaya viṣāṇi loke viṣa cala cala golamati gaṇḍavile cilimile sātiniṃne yathāsaṃvibhakte golamati gaṇḍavilāyayai svāhā //*

Take up, Ānanda this *ṣaḍakṣarī* spell, keep it, recite it, learn it for the welfare, the joy of yourself, for the welfare, the joy of the monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen. Ānanda, this *ṣaḍakṣarī* spell was spoken by the six Completely Enlightened, and by the Four Great Kings, and by Śakra, the king of the gods, and by Brahman, the Lord of the World. And now it is spoken by me, Śākyamuni, the Completely Enlightened. Now you too, Ānanda, keep it, recite it, learn it, which is as follows:

aṇḍare paṇḍare kāraṇḍe keyūre 'rcihaste kharagrīve bandhumati vīramati dhara vidha cilimile viloḍaya viṣāṇi loke viṣa cala cala golamati gaṇḍavile cilimile sātiniṃne yathāsaṃvibhakte golamati gaṇḍavilāyayai. Hail //

The references to *viṣa* in the *mantra* probably indicate the specific character of the spell and its association with poisonous substances. In the *Mahāsāhasrapramardinī* (Iwamoto 1937: 33), another *Pañcarakṣā* text formed

18 Cf. for this passage and Tibetan extracts thereof, Skilling 1992: 157, fn. 1.

around the core of a canonical *sūtra* – the **Ratna-sūtra* (Pali *Ratana-sutta*)¹⁹ – we find the following passage:

*vīryeṇa tejasā teṣāṃ viṣam astv aviṣaṃ sadā /
tatra mantrapadā bhonti nirviṣā viṣadūṣaṇāḥ //*
syād yathedam /
harikeśi / nakile / rehile / amare aṇḍare paṇḍare / kaṭake / keyūre /
hase hase hase / khase khase khase / kharāṅge / marugahaṇe svāhā //
mumukṣa svāhā / hile svāhā / mile svāhā //
hatā gaṇḍāḥ kilāsās ca vaisarpās ca vicarcikāḥ /
piṭṭakā lohaliṅgās ca kacchūr bhavati saptamī //
rāgo dveṣas ca mohaś ca ete loke trayo viṣāḥ /
nirviṣo bhagavān buddho buddhatejohataṃ viṣam //
rāgo dveṣas ca mohaś ca ete loke trayo viṣāḥ /
nirviṣo bhagavān dharmo dharmatejohataṃ viṣam //
rāgo dveṣas ca mohaś ca ete loke trayo viṣāḥ /
nirviṣo bhagavān saṃghaṃ saṃghatejohataṃ viṣam //
viṣasya pṛthivī mātā viṣasya pṛthivī pitā /
etena satyavākyaena viṣāḥ sarve syur nirviṣāḥ //

By the energy, by the heat of them (i.e. Buddhas, Pratyekabuddhas, Arhats, etc.) the poison shall always be non-poisonous. There are *mantra* words which are poisonless (*nirviṣa*), which make poison effectless (*viṣadūṣaṇa*), namely:

harikeśi. nakile. rehile. amare aṇḍare paṇḍare. kaṭake. keyūre. hase hase hase. hase khase khase. kharāṅge. marugahaṇe Hail. mumukṣa Hail. hile Hail. mile Hail.

Destroyed are goitres (*gaṇḍa*), cases of “white leprosy” (*kilāsa*), the effect of the *visarpa* disease, itch (*vicarcikā*), cases of tartar (*piṭṭaka*), bloody abscesses, and scab (*kacchū*) as the seventh.

Greed, hatred and delusion – these are the three poisons in the world.

Without poison is Lord Buddha, by the heat of the Buddha the poison is destroyed.

Greed, hatred and delusion – these are the three poisons in the world.

Without poison is Lord Dharma, by the heat of the Dharma the poison is destroyed.

Greed, hatred and delusion – these are the three poisons in the world.

Without poison is Lord Saṃgha, by the heat of the Saṃgha the poison is destroyed.

The earth is the mother of the poison, the earth is the father of the poison. By this true speech all poisons may be non-poisonous.

This passage of the *Mahāsāhasrapramardinī* is especially informative. Although it reinterprets the term *viṣa* “poison” in terms of Buddhist dogmatics, its reference to diseases, which are supposed to be caused by the influence of

19 For a study of the *Mahāsāhasrapramardinī* see Hidas ([forthcoming a](#)).

poisonous substances, gives a clear indication of the close connection of this type of magic with Indian sciences, especially with medicine (*āyurveda*).

Beside these parallels in Sanskrit texts there exists a small Tibetan *sūtra*, which is also associated with the *nāga* king Manasvin. In their *rgyud* department (= Tantra) the Tibetan Kanjurs contain a little text with the title *'phags pa klu'i rgyal po gzi can gyis žus pa žes bya ba'i gzuñs* (see Eimer 1989: 106, Nr. 284). Its Sanskrit title is given in different spellings. While the Western Group of Kanjurs uses the title (*ārya*)-*vira*-*vīra*-*nāgarāja*-*paripṛcchā*-*nāma*-*dhāraṇī* (cf. e.g. Narthang [Csoma de Kőrös 1881: 328, no. 17] and Stog 615 [Skorupski 1985: 280]), the Eastern Group transliterates the *nāgarāja*'s name either with *namasvi* or with *tapasvi*. The correct name of this *nāgarāja* was obviously known to the *Mahāvīyutpatti* (3285), which gives as equivalent of Tib. *klu'i rgyal po gzi can* Skt. *manasvī-nāgarāja*. The original Sanskrit title of the Tibetan *dhāraṇī* text should therefore be reconstructed as *Manasvi-nāgarāja-paripṛcchā-nāma-dhāraṇī* (cf. Strauch 2007/08: 45 f.).

The narrative frame of both *sūtras* seems to be rather different: in the Tibetan text the story is situated in the Indraśaila cave on the Vaidehaka mountain where snakes are tormenting the monks. The *nāga* king asks the Buddha what can be done to make an end to this disturbance. Following this request the Buddha announces the *mantra*.²⁰ Contrary to this, the Gāndhārī text treats the *mantra* as a gift from the side of the *nāga*. Another difference between the texts is the use of the designation *dhāraṇī*, which is avoided in the case of the Gāndhārī text, but is clearly found in the Tibetan parallel, both in its Sanskrit form in the transliteration of the title and in its Tibetan equivalent *gzuñs*. That both texts – the Tibetan *dhāraṇī* and the Gāndhārī *rakṣā sūtra* – are at least related to each other can be shown by the *mantras*, which share a common inventory of terms. The *mantra* of the Tibetan text runs according to the Derge edition of the Kanjur (D 659) as follows (parallel terms indicated here in bold print, see Table 3, column F):

tadyathā paṇḍare. karate. keyūre. bodhyaṃgamate. bindumate. araḍa. taraḍa. taruḍa. dahadahana. etadaha. jele jela. phale. śata śata. kule nakuli. ekarṣi taraṅgapriṣṭi.

While a number of words are parallel to the Gāndhārī text, some terms are only found in the other parallels (cf. Table 3). This shows that the two texts do not directly depend upon each other, but seem to go back to a common source that was also used in other texts, such as for example the *Mahāmāyūrī*.

The place where such a source should be looked for was already indicated by the *Mahāsāhasrapramardinī* that showed clear connections with Indian scientific traditions. It is probable that the list of “Great poisons”, that seems to form the origin of the terms of the *mantra*, is based on an inventory of poisonous plants or substances which was known not only in Buddhist circles or in magical contexts, but was formed in an early botanic or medical tradition of India. This

20 A comparative study of both versions is currently being carried out with Cristina Scherrer-Schaub in the framework of a joint seminar at the University of Lausanne. The author thanks Cristina Scherrer-Schaub for the preliminary information.

evidence is further corroborated by the fact that the Tibetan text also explicitly refers to the “Great poisons and medicines” using the term *dug dan sman chen po bcva brgyad po* “eighteen great poisons and medicines”.

At present it is not possible to trace such a list in any of the preserved early Āyurvedic texts, but at least some of the terms can be cautiously identified or associated with healing or poisonous plants mentioned in later literature. Thus the term *bidumaṭi* of the Gāndhārī text can be connected with Skt. *bindukinī* or *binduka*, the latter cited by Hellwig (2009: 150) under the category “poison”. Other terms such as *pāṇḍara*, *karaṇḍa* and *śrīmatī* are attested in the dictionaries more generally as a “kind of plant” (see PW s. vv.). More specific is the connotation of *taraṭa* as a certain medical plant (PW s.v.) and of *tejovātī*, a kind of pepper (“*Piper chaba* W. Hunt”, PW s. v.). The last term is also found in Madanapāla’s *Nighaṇṭu*. According to Dash (1991: 65) it designates *Zanthoxylum alatum*. Madanapāla also refers to *keyūra* as a designation of a medical plant: “yam (*Dioscorea bulbifera*)” (Dash 1991: 360).

Further research is required here to identify these species and to clarify whether they have a specific connection with poisonous or healing substances. But there is good reason to assume that the lists reproduced in the *Mahāmāyūrī* and in the various magical formulae are based on an otherwise lost botanical or medical tradition. Table 3 lists the distinctive terms of the different traditions.

Summary

The Gāndhārī**Manasvi-nāgarāja-sūtra* is a representative of early post-canonical *rakṣā* literature. Its compositional structure and the phraseology of its narrative part are based on that of canonical protective *sūtras*, which served as models for this newly emerging class of texts. Especially close is the relationship of the Gāndhārī *sūtra* to some texts of the *Pañcarakṣā* group and among them especially to the *Mahāmāyūrī*. Thus the Gāndhārī *mantra* contains, according to the text, the names of poisonous substances (*mahāviṣa*) which are closely related to the lists of *mahāviṣas* as preserved in the text of the *Mahāmāyūrī*. Some of the terms are also found in *mantras* that are part of other post-canonical protective texts. They are also supposed to be effective against poisons and show that the composition of the Gāndhārī **Manasvi-nāgarāja-sūtra* was part of a broader development in north Indian Buddhism that is reflected in different types of texts.

Another, and probably later, representative of the *Manasvi-dhāraṇī* is found in the Tibetan Kanjur. Despite their diverging narrative frames, the *mantra* of this text shows parallels as well to the Gāndhārī as to the *Mahāmāyūrī* text. This shows that all three versions represent independent branches of a common tradition. This common tradition seems to be rooted in a list of *mahāviṣas* from a seemingly lost botanical or medical tradition. If this assumption is correct, such a scientific tradition could be identified as one of the possible sources for Buddhist *rakṣā* practices.

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